A STATEMENT TO THE CONGREGATION OF
FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CHICAGO

ON THE CRISIS IN THE PERSIAN GULF

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At the conclusion of the Senate debate and vote which approved by a 52 - 47 margin the use of force in the Gulf, a television commentator observed that a chill had descended over the Capitol.

So, this morning, American Christians, along with the rest of the country are faced with the necessity of dealing with this new reality, this new possibility, in the context of their faith.

That is not easy to do. It is never easy to be faithful and to be involved in the life of the world. In this matter, people of good will and high intelligence and deep conviction have very different ideas about the various strategies our political leaders have been discussing and the very difficult decisions they must now make.

We wish for certainty and clarity. But there is very little of either. Yesterday's Senate and House debate was powerful and emotional and impassioned. And people who have experienced armed conflict in the past, World War II, Korea and Vietnam, were led by their personal experience to differing conclusions.

We wish for simplicity, and there is none. Some of us do not believe military force should be used, ever. Some of us believe military force is justified when every other conceivable means of resolving conflict has been exhausted. Some of us believe that use of military force now will prevent its further and more massive use later. All of us wish the alternatives themselves were clear.

Fourth Presbyterian Church, as it has during critical moments in the life of the nation in the past, wishes to stand, at this critical moment with its members and friends in ways that are supportive and helpful. The church aspires to be faithful to its Lord above all else: to listen for God's word, to try to discern God's will and, to the very best of its ability, to do it.

And so, in response to this critical moment, the following...

Since Christmas we have been sponsoring daily prayers for peace, Monday through Friday at 5:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. These 15-minute services are led by staff persons, and they will continue daily. You are invited to attend, to pray... for peace, for the young men and women in our Armed Forces, for our President as he makes the very difficult decisions which lie ahead.

Various educational opportunities focusing on issues of the Near East, and faith issues for Christians, Jews and Moslems, are being planned by our Adult Education Committee.

And you are encouraged to express yourself to our Government, particularly the President. Whatever your position is, let your voice be heard. Appropriate addresses and post cards will be available this morning after worship, at a table outside the south transept, beside Blair Chapel.

The Counseling Center is establishing a support group or groups for families of those involved in any way in the Gulf situation. These groups will provide a forum to express feelings and concerns and to experience the support of a caring community. They will be led by the director of the church's counseling center, Dr. John Boyle.

Each morning the staff begins the day together in prayer, and we have been praying for family members and church families we know who are in the Gulf. Please call the church office with names of loved ones and friends and they will be remembered daily at staff prayers at 9:00 a.m. in Blair Chapel.

The Executive Presbyter of the Presbytery of Chicago, Paul Rutgers, in a communique to all the churches about our responsibilities in this crisis, concluded eloquently: "No one can predict what will happen in the coming days. We pray for a just peace. We live in hope. And we aspire to faithfulness. The Morning Star shines in the darkness."

So it does. Thanks be to God.